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(56) Documents Cited
GB 2335066 A   GB 2328311 A
GB 2153572 A   WO 2001/083063 A1
WO 2001/015055 A1

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(54) Abstract Title
"Fruit" machine with novice and expert modes

(57) An AWP gaming machine incorporates a variety of available play features of varying complexity. A selection mechanism 1,3,5 enables the user to preselect a combination of the play features to suit a desired level of skill (novice, medium or expert) required for playing a game on the machine. In Fig 3 (not shown) the preselected novice, medium and expert combinations are replaced by a button/touchpad array 10 which allows all play features to be individually adjusted.
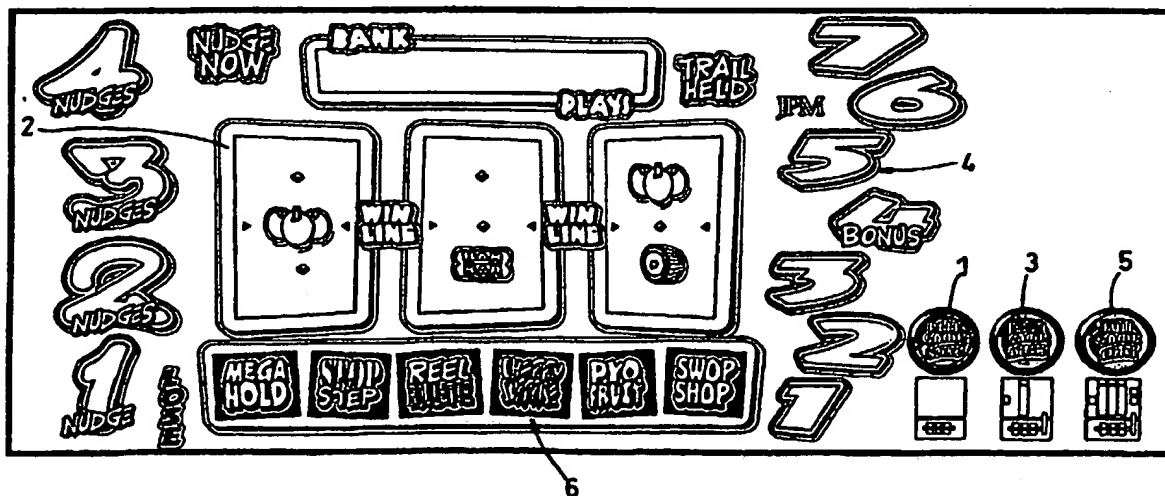
Fig. 1

re filed later than the filing date but within the period prescribed by Rule 25(1) of the Patents Rules 1995.
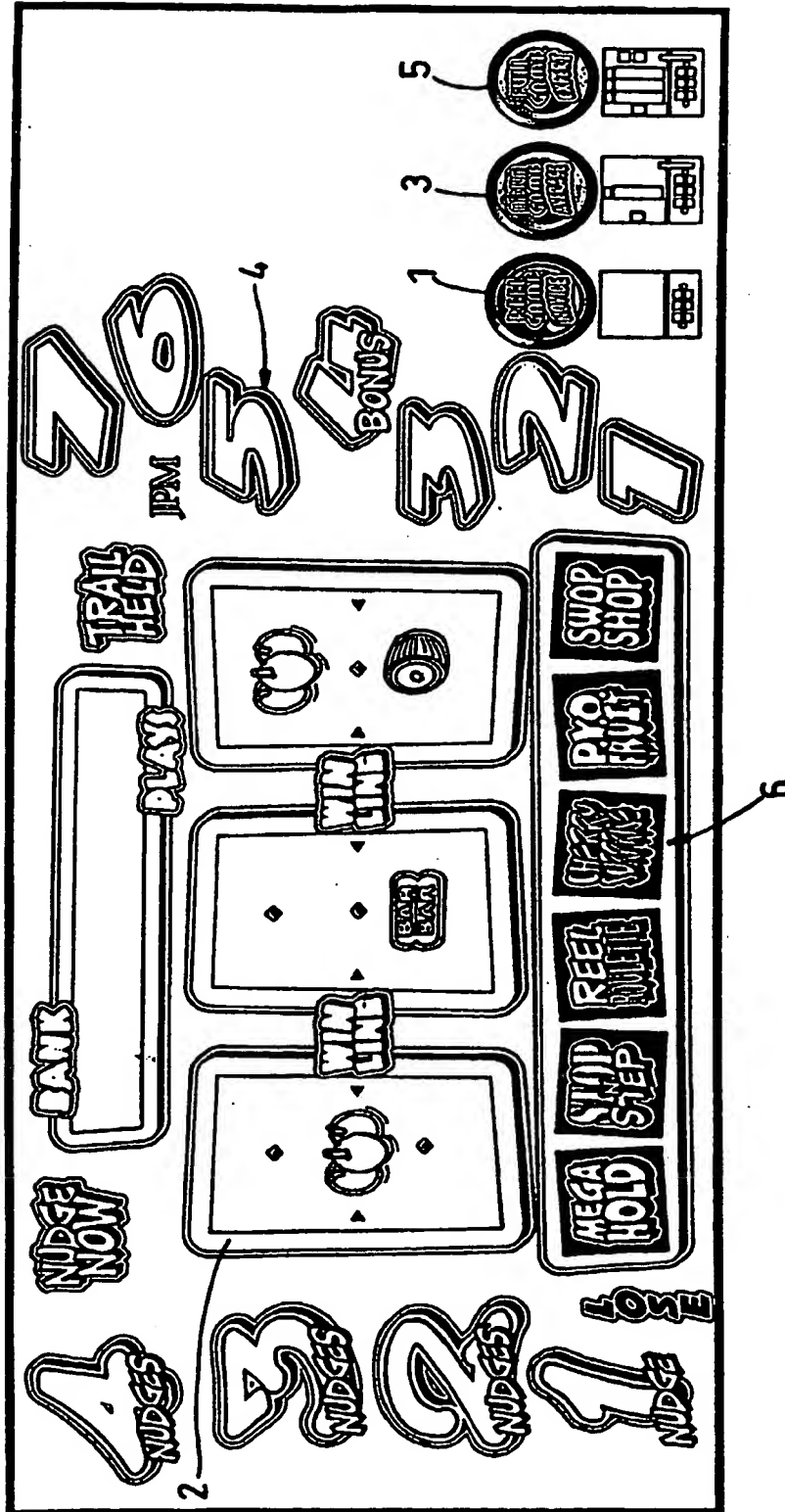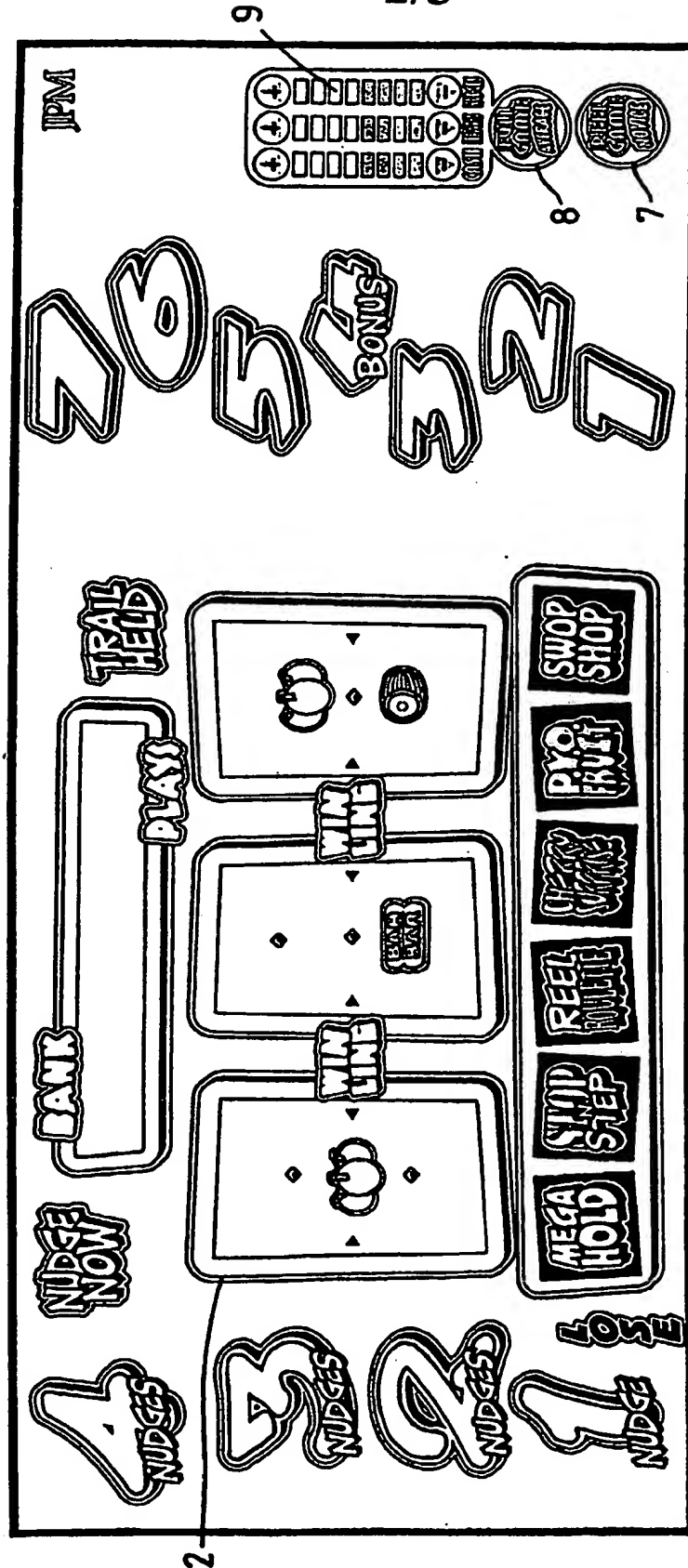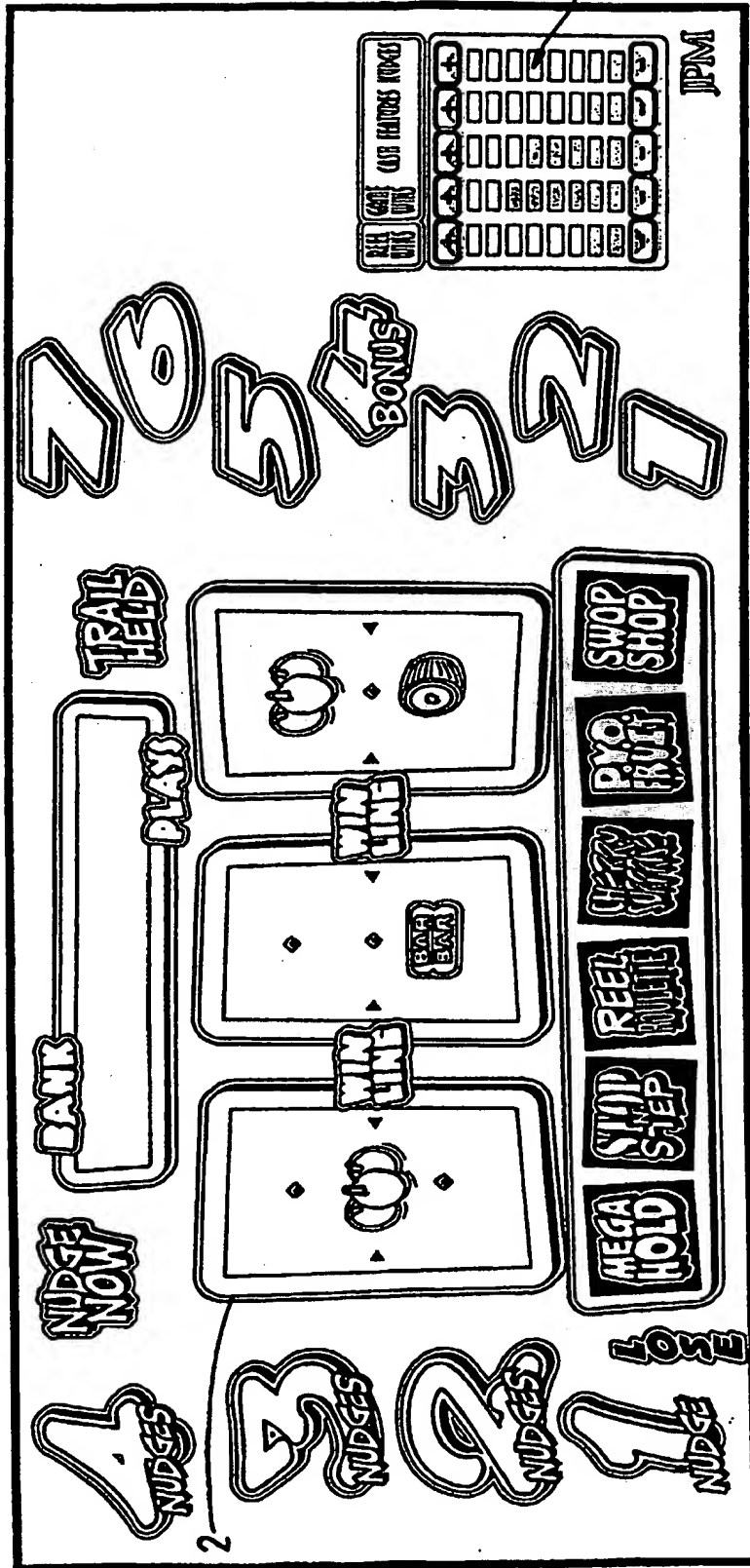
Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

"Skill Game"

One type of gaming machine is referred to as an amusement-with-prizes machine, particularly known as a fruit machine. Machines of this type have a number of reels or drums, or equivalents such as endless bands hereinafter referred to generally as "reels", which are spun and then stop in a variable manner to reveal a combination of symbols in display windows. Certain combinations result in prizes, usually monetary, being awarded. Such machines will be referred to generally as AWP machines.

Machines can be sited/operated in many types of location and the location can influence/determine the people who will be available to play the machine. Therefore, it has become accepted practice to develop different types of games to suit different locations and players. For example, machines for bingo halls tend to have simple games, with most win/lose outcomes determined by the spin of the reels or simple features such as hold and/or nudge. At the other extreme, amusement arcades will usually have machines with "hidden features" and/or board game implementations, for example, Monopoly (Registered Trademark). Experienced or knowledgeable players believe that they can utilise these features to obtain a better "win" from machines than average players.

It is an object of this invention to provide a gaming machine which allows for the ability level of the user.

According to the present invention there is provided an AWP gaming machine incorporating a variety of available play features of varying complexity and a selection mechanism enabling the user to preselect a combination of said play features to suit a desired level of skill required for playing a game on the machine.

Thus, when using such a machine the operator will first be able to select a level of skill that he believes is best suited to his abilities. Obviously the machine will be programmed such that operators using a higher skill level have the opportunity of obtaining greater rewards.

In one form of the machine the user may be presented with a predetermined choice of particular combinations of said play features from which to make a selection.

In an alternative arrangement the user may be presented with a choice of level of availability of individual play features from which to make a selection. In such a machine the level of availability of each play feature may be illustrated on a scale and a selection mechanism is provided to enable a particular level to be chosen by the user.

The invention may be performed in various ways and preferred examples thereof will now be described, with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is an illustration of features on the panel of one form of gaming machine of this invention; and

Figures 2 and 3 are similar views illustrating alternative versions of gaming machines of this invention.

The idea behind this concept is to allow the player to tailor the type of machine that he wants to play. In the example of Figure 1, by pressing the button 1 called "Reel game - novice" the machine will operate such that all wins will be from the stopping position of the reels 2, with or without the influence of hold and/or nudge features. By selecting the button 3 for "Medium game - average" the machine will offer wins from the reels and also trail type features (for example, the numerical trail 4), usually associated with "high-low" gambles etc. The button 5 for "Full game - expert" would bring into play the options to swap between trails, nudges and award features 6, based on "knowledge" of the relative values of the awards and their positions on the matrix. The selection process may be available to the player at the start of each game or selectively enabled, with or without the previous selection being carried over.

A variation on the theme is shown in Figure 2. In this instance, upon pressing the button 7 for "Reel game - novice" the machine will cause standard operation as above, but by selecting the button 8 for "Full game - expert" the player would have the ability to "fine tune" how he wants the machine to play, by altering the ratio of "cash" to "features" to "nudges". In this example, the bar graphs 9 represent the relative levels of each constituent, with

buttons or touch sensitive areas being used to adjust the values. Again, availability would be as above.

A third variation, shown in Figure 3, offers the player the option to "fine tune" the machine behaviour by adjusting the complete array of machine performance variables. As shown these are displayed in bar-graph form with button/touch pad adjustment.

It will be appreciated that the symbols and decorative features shown in the drawings can be modified as desired and that the concepts described can be extended to other implementations or layouts and could also be created using video technology.

CLAIMS

1. An AWP gaming machine incorporating a variety of available play features of varying complexity and a selection mechanism enabling the user to preselect a
5   combination of said play features to suit a desired level of skill required for playing a game on the machine.

2. A gaming machine according to claim 1, wherein a user is presented with a predetermined choice of particular combinations of said play features from which to make a
10 selection.

3. A gaming machine according to claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein a user is presented with a choice of level of availability of individual play features from which to make a selection.

15 4. A gaming machine according to claim 3, wherein the level of availability of each play feature is illustrated on a scale and a selection mechanism is provided to enable a particular scale level to be chosen by the user.

5. An AWP gaming machine substantially as herein
20 described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

6. Any novel combination of features of an AWP gaming machine as described herein and/or as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

| Application No: | GB 0129771.2 | | Examiner: | Bridie Collier |
| Claims searched: | 1-5 | | Date of search: | 2 May 2003 |

Patents Act 1977 : Search Report under Section 17

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Relevant to claims	Identity of document and passage or figure of particular relevance	
X	1-4	GB 2335066 A	(IGT-UK) See buttons 25-29, Fig 1
X	1-4	GB 2328311 A	(BARCREST) See buttons 6a, 6b
X	1-4	GB 2153572 A	(ARTHUR) See start button 16, gamble button 32
X	1	WO 01/83063 A1	(ARISTOCRAT) See abstract
X	1-4	WO 01/15055 A1	(ARISTOCRAT) See selector 20

Categories:

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.

Field of Search:

Search of GB, EP, WO & US patent documents classified in the following areas of the UKC^V:

G4V

Worldwide search of patent documents classified in the following areas of the IPC^7:

G07F

The following online and other databases have been used in the preparation of this search report:

WPI, EPODOC, JAPIO